

Leader-Telegram Clergy Column  
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### Give Thanks With More than Words

Thanksgiving might be the most truly American holiday. The whole country comes almost to a stop on Thanksgiving, except for football. Most of us spend the day at home or at someone else's. I like Thanksgiving because it's stress-free. Make a lot of food, eat it, then nap. Then maybe eat again. No other holiday includes a nap. It's the one day we adults can relive the unblemished innocence and freedom of Kindergarten. We should allow ourselves a nap the fourth Thursday of every month. We'd be less tense. And maybe more capable of a spirit of true thankfulness.

Thanksgiving is wonderful precisely because it isn't about things, but about giving thanks. We in the United States have much for which to be thankful. Not because we're intrinsically better – we're not; not because we hold more favor from God – we don't; and not because we were granted any special privilege of power – we weren't; but because we do have so much more in terms of material wealth, resources, access to health care, clean drinking water, abundant food, education, literacy, workplace safety, checks and balances, opportunities, etc. Things we often take for granted. Things which most of the world look at with eyes wide-open in desire, like seeing a neighbor come home with a new and larger SUV. And while we professing Christians hopefully are thankful at all times, dedicating a day for offering thanks to God is a good thing to do.

I am thankful for the composers, performers, authors, and painters that nourish my soul. For my clergy colleagues, my church family, and for the faith they teach me through example and admonition. Thanks for access to cars, roads, computers, books, airplanes, housing, artwork on the walls, and the luxury of DVDs and CDs, for friends and family and good health and so much more. But I write this as a Christian, and so, while Thanksgiving is for giving thanks (in my case, to God) 'thank you' is not quite enough. It is essential, but it is also a little too easy. Action, maybe even some sacrifice, are important in showing our thankfulness. Actions such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and housing the homeless show thanks. A spirit of thankfulness is shown when we say, "I am so thankful, God, for what I have, that I must share it with my neighbors". America has much that the rest of the world does not. Even in America, too many Americans don't have what I, or what most of you reading this paper, have. Let our thankfulness go beyond the arrogance that says that we who have much are favored by God and they (homosexuals, minorities, women, Muslims, other countries, immigrants, the rude guy that cut you off in traffic, etc.) are not. Let our thankfulness inspire us to fight for political, social, and environmental justice. Let it inspire us to offer charity, but even more so to tear down the dysfunctional systems that cause people to be hungry, thirsty, or sick for lack of the healthcare to which all persons have a God-given right. Let it inspire us to grow more Christian empathy and compassion towards the needs, sufferings, and grievances of our neighbors here and abroad. Let

it inspire us to strive tirelessly for the radical inclusion of the entirety of the awesome diversity of God's people, instead of wasting energy inventing specious and hurtful methods of exclusion.

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Thanksgiving prayer is that we will let our thankfulness inspire us to look within and say to ourselves, "I have enough. My neighbor – perhaps my enemy – needs more. And out of thanksgiving, I give it to them."

Have a happy and thankful Thanksgiving, and happy holidays, whatever your holidays may be, to all of you in the coming month.